

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7, 9, 11, 14-18 and 33 are pending in this application. Claims 12-13 and 19-32 were previously canceled. Claims 6, 8, and 10 are cancelled herein. Claim 1 is in independent form and the remaining claims depend from claim 1. Claim 33 is new. Claims 1, 2, and 7 have been amended. No new matter has been entered by any of the amendments.

In the office action, the Examiner objected to the drawings as not showing some of the claimed features. Applicant has canceled claims 6, 8, and 10 in view of this rejection and submits that this rejection is obviated. The specification was objected to in view of the missing section headings. Applicant has added headings, as well as a brief description of the drawings, which was also missing. No new matter has been entered.

Claims 1, 11, 14 and 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,305,650 to Koike et al. Claims 2-5 and 9-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of the combination of Koike and U.S. Patent No. 5,150,937 to Yakou. Claim 7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of the combination of Koike, Yakou, and U.S. Patent No. 3,843,187 to Schaefer et al. or U.S. Patent No. 4,500,065 to Hennekes et al., and U.S. Patent No. 6,455,002 to Jokes et al. Claim 15 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) obvious in view of the combination of Koike and Great Britain Patent No. 2,284,901A to Guhl. Claim 1 has been amended to point out that the workstation is a metering system for both solids and liquids.

Koike discloses an automatic preparation apparatus for automatically performing preparation steps such as dissolution, extraction, filtration, dilution and reaction with reagent of a sample liquid. Koike, however, is silent regarding performing preparation steps with a solid. Claim 1 now requires that the workstation meter both solids and liquids. Other references cited by the Examiner do not provide this missing element. In particular, Yakou relates to a work pickup apparatus, Hennekes relates to a mechanical manipulator, Schaefer relates to an article grasping finger, and Smith relates to an endoscopic robotic surgical tool. Thus, neither Koike nor any of these other cited references teaches or suggests the workstation of amended claim 1 or the claims that depend therefrom.

With respect to Guhl, Guhl exclusively discloses a device for automatically filling powder or granulated materials into a sample vessel. Guhl teaches a robot on a platform used for

holding, tilting and shaking vessels containing a solid powder. The robot grasping arm is attached to the platform or rolls along the platform.

Claim 1 requires a portal system that is arranged above the platform. The portal system maneuvers the metering system in all three directions in space. The portal system is arranged above the platform in order to allow it to move various components (two distinct metering systems, one for solids and one for liquids) relative to the entire platform in 3D. Such versatility of movement cannot be achieved with a robot arm arranged in the center of a platform and essentially having a spherical working radius around the center of the robot, as taught by Guhl.

Claim 1 also requires a reservoir for the chemical educt and a metering tool supported on another module of the platform. The workstation requires the presence of a metering tool that is uptaken by the gripper of the metering system and that takes solids from a reservoir and fills it into a target container. Claim 1 also relates to a metering system with a gripper device for the uptake of a metering tool. The gripper device is obviously capable of gripping objects. A robot arm that simply has an opening for inserting a shovel-type tool, as taught by Guhl, does not anticipate the claimed metering device with a gripper device for uptaking a metering tool.

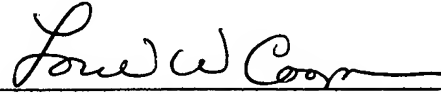
Thus, Guhl discloses a robot on a platform but fails to disclose a portal system that is arranged above the platform. Since the robot grasping arm is already the metering system in Guhl, it cannot also be the portal system that moves the metering system in all three directions in space. Guhl only discloses that the grasping robot arm takes up and shakes the entire sample vessel (see Guhl at items 4 to 6 of claim 1). While Guhl discloses the presence of a reservoir for the chemical educt that is being metered into a target container, Guhl fails to disclose the presence of a metering tool separate therefrom that is also supported within a module on the platform used to actually meter the sample into the target container. Thus, Guhl discloses an apparatus that is functionally completely different from the workstation that is presently claimed. A person skilled in the art would not look at Guhl to modify the apparatus of Koike to arrive at the claimed subject matter. Thus, the pending claims are submitted to be allowable over the combination of Guhl and Koike.

In view of the above arguments and amendments, applicant submits that the claims are in condition for allowance, early notice of which will be appreciated. Should the Examiner disagree, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner contact applicant's representative for a telephonic interview so that any remaining issues can be resolved.

No fees are believed to be due with the submission of this Amendment. Should any fees be required, the Commissioner is authorized to charge such fees to deposit account No. 50-1432.

Respectfully submitted,

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